

**Discuss whether recipients of aid should be required to plan properly as suggested in this article.**

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**LEARN TSUNAMI LESSONS IN HAITI RECONSTRUCTION, SAY AID AGENCIES**

**4 Feb 2010**

**Lessons learnt after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami show that the international community must not rush into a quick-fix rebuilding of permanent homes, schools and other buildings in Haiti, said the UK-based Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) today.**

**If necessary, rebuilding should be delayed to leave time for proper planning, so that reconstruction leaves the Haitian people better protected from hurricanes and earthquakes than they were before the 12 January 2010 earthquake.**

**Brendan Gormley, Chief Executive of the DEC, commented: “Right now the Haitian people need good quality temporary accommodation and emergency relief. But we are also looking at how we can help people to rebuild their lives over the next three years, leaving Haiti better prepared for future natural disasters.**

**“It’s important to learn from the Indian Ocean tsunami, after which the DEC aid agencies faced unprecedented devastation. A key lesson is not to rebuild houses and public buildings too quickly but to take the time to get it right.”**

**Homes need to be designed and constructed to be earthquake resistant and to withstand hurricanes, sited in suitable locations to reduce risk from flooding and landslides, and adequately supplied by services such as sewerage and water.**

**According to a recent independent report by engineering, planning and design consultants Arup, DEC agencies and their partners in Aceh worked to build back better and reduce vulnerability to natural hazards, with high occupancy rates of the resulting homes reflecting the quality of construction. However, the report noted some early mistakes in Aceh, resulting partly from a desire to move too quickly in delivering permanent homes for affected people.**

**The report's lead author, Jo da Silva, who heads Arup’s International Development team, said: “After the tsunami, the DEC aid agencies recognised the opportunity of re-construction as a catalyst for recovery and to reduce people’s vulnerability to future hazards. As a result the legacy they left is more than bricks and mortar, and the experience provides invaluable lessons for reconstruction in Haiti.”**

**Other post-tsunami lessons for humanitarian and construction professionals include:**

- \* Ensuring effective strategic planning and cooperation between all agencies.**
- \* Making greater use of the construction sector’s expertise by engaging construction experts as consultants or partnering with the private sector.**
- \* Involving affected people at all stages, to ensure that new homes are appropriate for their needs.**
- \* Avoiding a ‘one-size fits all’ approach focusing on providing homes, and instead, focusing on providing assistance to rebuild homes and communities.**
- \* Being clear about land rights before building commences.**

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